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March 13, 2012

**To the Co-Chairs and members of the Labor Committee
Testimony in OPPOSITION of HB 5401 and HB 5311 to protect prevailing wage and SUPPORT
of HB 5433 and SB 352, bills that would give home health care workers and child care
workers the ability to collectively bargain for decent wages and benefits.**

Submitted by Kennard Ray, Legislative Director

Senator Prague, Representative Zalaski, and all members of the Labor Committee, I'd like to begin by taking a moment to thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak about the very important issue of prevailing wage.

This committee is faced each and every day with issues that affect Connecticut's hardest working men and women. Employees, employers and advocates all come before you to work towards instituting best practices for segments of Connecticut's work force. Today, I am here to advocate on behalf of many of those workers. The workers that I am here for, Connecticut's 26,000 skilled men and women in the construction industry are – as we all know – currently entrenched in an unfathomly deep work deficit, with unemployment hovering at a rate near 40% in their industry. With this alarmingly high unemployment rate already crippling the lives of our great state's builders, laborers and machinist, working to ensure that every protection to stop the blood-let of jobs and establish confidence in the lives of these workers would seem to be a slam-dunk, no brainer for everyone. But, for those who have raised these bills it is not.

The people who have raised HB 5401 and HB 5311 have unilaterally dismissed the plight of the construction industry and have decided to take it a step further and kick our state's hardest workers while they're down. These bills as proposed would raise Connecticut's current prevailing wage threshold – which is currently among the highest in America – and limit the number of jobs that the current prevailing wage laws are applicable to. By raising the threshold on prevailing wage, we make it that much harder for homegrown Connecticut contractors to get their employees on the kinds of jobs that safe guard our middle class, while on the very same token, we open up the floodgates to out of state low-bidders. Bussing in unsafe, unskilled, low pay workers from surrounding states and beyond may seem like the perfect quick-fix to some, but like most quick fixes, the repercussions run deep. These out-of-state workers come and leave nothing in their wake. They add nothing to the state: no state tax revenue, sustained spending at local business or local property tax rolls, nor do they vote.

It's a wonder that we're even at this juncture, where another attack on the middle class has been mounted against Connecticut's working families under the guise as a way to cut spending. The reality is, raising the prevailing wage threshold could cost the state \$80 million per year or more in withholding taxes. What's more, we'll stand to lose 10 to 12 times that amount in worker's wages that would usually be pumped into the local economy.

With this said, I urge you to vote no on HB 5401 and HB 5311, and protect Connecticut's prevailing wage.

In the same vain of protecting Connecticut's workers and the middle class, I urge you to support and vote yes on HB 5433 and SB 352, bills that would enable family child care providers and personal care attendants to collective bargain with the state to improve their service as well as their own lives. Child care providers and PCAs both work out of the public eye--providing vital care for children, seniors and people with disabilities.

But today, as I stand before you family child care providers and PCA's go without earning a living wage, without access to affordable health care, and without a collective, unified voice to make their profession better for themselves and those who they serve. Vote yes on HB 5433 and SB 352 to protect and enhance the lives of some of the state's most overlooked workers.